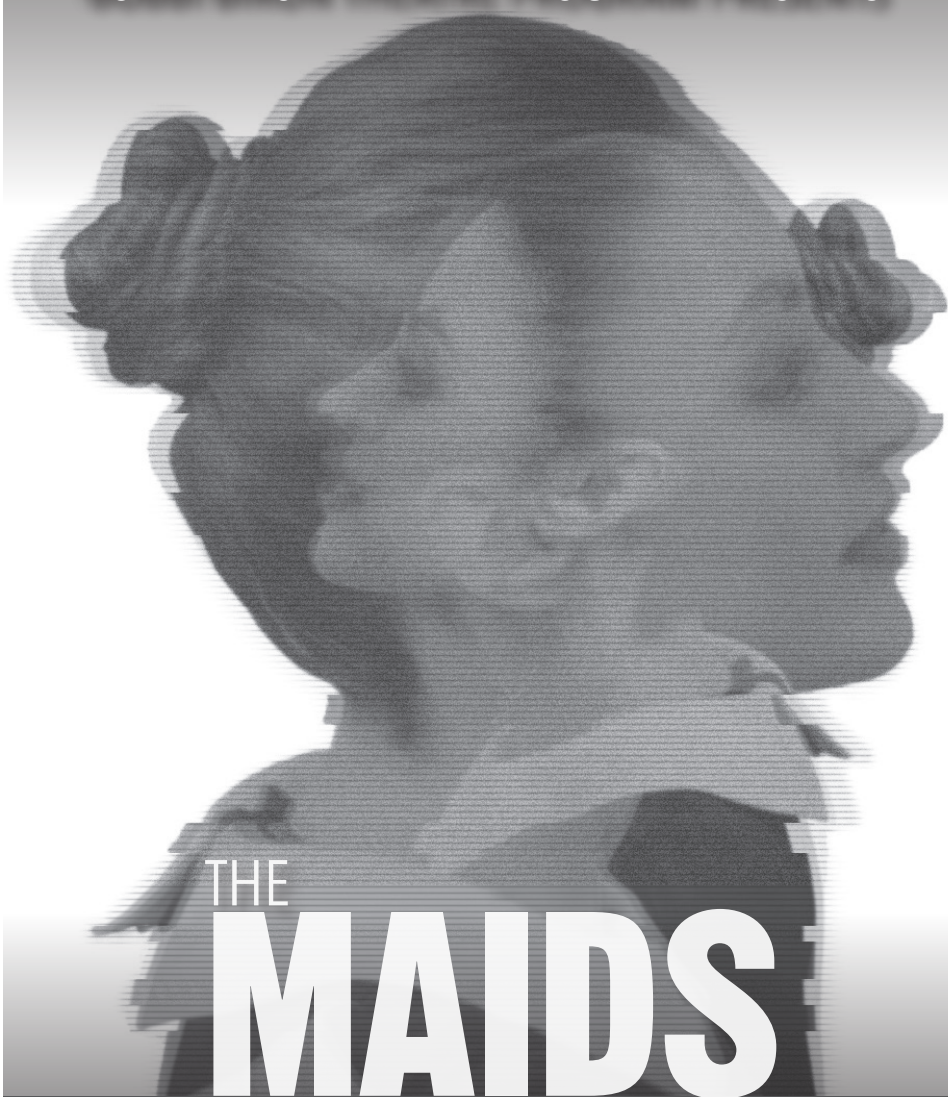


THE DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DANCE

BOBBI BIRON THEATRE PROGRAM PRESENTS



THE MAIDS

BY **JEAN GENET**

DIRECTED BY **BLAKE HARRIS**

TRANSLATED BY **BERNARD FRECHTMAN**

May 4-7*, 2023

Fulton Hall, Black Box Theatre

7:30 p.m. & *2 p.m. Sunday

Salisbury
UNIVERSITY

www.salisbury.edu

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director	Blake Harris
Scenic Designer	John Raley
Costume Designer	Melissa Florez
Video Designer	Tlálóc López-Watermann
Lighting Designer	Daelyn Funk
Sound Designer	Haley Rawls
Composer	Derek Etman
Props Designer	Blake Harris
Wig Designer for Madame	Andre "Tula" Hopfer
Stage Manager	Jada Martin
Costume Advisor	Leslie Yarmo
Costume Shop Manager	Chelsea Dean
Scenic Studio Supervisor	Michael Mitchell
Light Board Programmer	Austin Wisniewski
Assistant Stage Manager	Grey Reynolds
Dramaturg	Destiny Mosley
Scenic Studio Staff	Andrea Sicoli, Grayson Crosby, Lyric Combs, Daelyn Funk, Annie Geitner, Yzabella Mattern, Mariah Scott & Andrew King
Lighting & Sound Technicians	Sivan Cohen, James Benedict & Austin Wisniewski
Stage Crew	Allie Nowotny, Alwick Blouch & Austin Wisniewski
Costume Studio Staff	Melissa Florez & Caroline Lawson
Wardrobe Crew	Sierra Wakefield, Bryce Young & James Benedict

CONCORD THEATRICALS

The Maids is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.

www.concordtheatricals.com

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SPECIAL THANKS

Edit Salon • PAC14

This production includes strobe lighting, bright lights and loud sounds.

No intermission. If you leave the theatre, you will not be allowed to re-enter.

Please silence your cell phones.

CAST

Claire Madeleine Davis

Solange Megan Bradley

Madame Seren Gross

MEET THE CAST & STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM



Megan Bradley



Madeleine Davis



Seren Gross



Jada Martin



Grey Reynolds

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BIOGRAPHIES

Megan Bradley (she/her) is a senior at Salisbury University, studying English literature and theatre performance, and she will be graduating in spring 2023. She will be performing the role of Solange in this production. Most recently, Bradley took part in the fall production of *The Seagull* as Medvedenko, the 2022 spring musical *Mamma Mia!*, portrayed Emily Webb in Salisbury University's 2021 production of *Our Town* (a KCACTF nominated role) and Antonio in *Twelfth Night* with Fultontown Theatre. She is very grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such a colorful and lively production and thanks her family and friends for their unwavering love and support of all her creative pursuits.

Madeleine Davis (she/her) is a senior at Salisbury University, studying English literature and theatre performance. She is portraying Claire in this production and her previous credits at Salisbury University include *Mud*, *Our Town* and the 2021 Directing Scenes Showcase. She thanks the cast and crew for an amazing Senior Show and her friends and family for all their love and support.

Seren Gross (she/her), who plays Madame, is a transfer student in her third semester at Salisbury University. She also previously performed in Salisbury's *Mamma Mia!* in 2022. She has also performed in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* with Open Space Arts Theatre Company.

Jada Martin (she/her) is the stage manager for SU's production of *The Maids*. She is a first-year student majoring in mathematics on a secondary education track. This is Jada's second production at Salisbury and working in the stage management team. She is so excited to share this show with everyone and hopes you enjoy it!

Grey Reynolds (they/them) is a freshman at Salisbury University, majoring in psychology and theatre. They will be assistant stage managing this production. This is their second production at SU, and they are so excited to be a part of it. They thank the cast and crew members who have made this production such a wonderful experience, as well as family and friends who have always been supportive of them.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"I contain within me both vengeance and the maid and give them a chance for life, a chance for salvation."

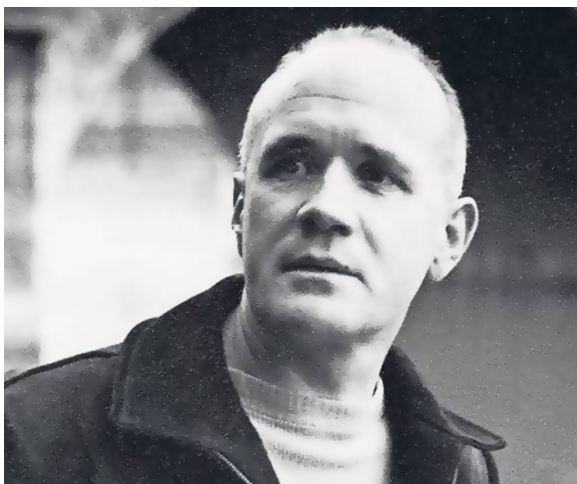
Famed rocker Patti Smith quotes the opening line of Jean Genet's semi-autobiographical *The Thief's Journal* in her forward to the novel: "Convicts' garb is striped pink and white." As she notes, Genet queers the masculinity of the prison setting by immediately calling out the femininity of the prisoners' uniforms. When discussing Genet's act of queering, the double meaning of the term is intended: queer as a (re) coding of sexuality and estranging the familiar and mundane through dizzying, obsessive focus. In fact, this doubling, as illustrated in *The Maids*, is central to his artistic expression.

Claire stares into Solange's eyes and says, "I'm sick of seeing my image thrown back at me by a mirror, like a bad smell. You're my bad smell." The two sisters are each other's mirror, not just reflecting each other's physical likeness but also the oppression of their reality. If not too distracting, take note throughout the performance of how often Genet employs the imagery of the double: mirrors, impersonations, reflections, echoes, shadows, etc. Solange and Claire's paranoia could even be considered an example of *folie à deux* ("the folly/madness of two," a shared delusion between two people), heightening their tightly wound duplicity. Through the queered boundaries of the double, Genet is able to expose the stark hypocrisy of the social class divisions and patriarchal prescriptions of femininity.

On a personal note, this piece serves as a mirror of a former process. I developed this hyperfeminine, pink and purple fever dream of a concept of *The Maids* in late 2019, and a group of collaborators and I were set to perform it in Tennessee in March 2020. Our production, along with the rest of the world, shut down. We abandoned hundreds of stuffed animals still set up in a rehearsal room until we could throw them in totes and store them in my parents' basement. Instead of abandoning the project, the theatre program agreed not only to take on this project but enhance it beyond what I ever imagined this piece could be. After transferring hundreds of stuffed animals across state lines over the course of a year, I began unpacking the Rubbermaid time capsules, rediscovering a process that had been frozen in time. I was faced with a mirror of a former process, a pre-COVID-19 process. Genet centralizes ritual in all of his works, and I was suddenly engaged in my own ritual of excavating the past to discover what this piece is in the present.

I am grateful for the three years between starting this piece and bringing it to fruition — sometimes we need to sit with our mirrors for a long while to discover what is beyond the facade. And I am eternally grateful to the SU Bobbi Biron Theatre Program for trusting my vision for this piece.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jean Genet was born in Paris on December 19, 1910, the illegitimate son of a prostitute who abandoned him to a foundling home and was later taken in by a foster family. After the death of his foster mother, his status within the family was changed to that of a domestic servant. From the ages of 15 to 18, he repeatedly ran away from reformatory school, stole, was imprisoned and was eventually sent back to the reformatory school from which he had escaped. In March 1929, Genet enrolled in the French army and was sent to Syria. In 1936, he deserted the army and adopted the life of a vagabond, thief and prostitute. In 1940, while in prison, he began work on *Our Lady of the Flowers*. In 1943, he was sent to an internment camp that was a known deportation center for Nazi concentration camps. More than 40 influential writers and artists, convinced of his literary genius, intervened on his behalf. He was freed in March 1944 and never returned to prison. In 1949, France's president accorded a pardon to Genet for deserting the army. In 1983, he received the National Grand Prize for Literature given by the French Ministry of Culture. On April 15, 1986, Genet died in a small hotel in Paris after falling and hitting his head. He was buried 10 days later in Morocco. Although he did not begin writing until the age of 32, he was one of the most productive French writers of the century. His works include poetry and novels *Our Lady of the Flowers* and *Miracle of the Rose*, the autobiographical *The Thief's Journal*, *Querelle of Brest* and *Funeral Rites*. He wrote six plays: *Deathwatch*, *The Maids*, *The Balcony*, *The Blacks*, *The Screens* and *Splendids* (the manuscript of which was rediscovered only in 1993). (www.writerstheatre.org)

ABOUT THE STYLE: ABSURDISM

The Theatre of the Absurd is a movement made up of many diverse plays, most of which were written between 1940 and 1960. When first performed, these plays shocked their audiences as they were startlingly different than anything that had been previously staged. In fact, many of them were labelled as “anti-plays.” In an attempt to clarify and define this radical movement, Martin Esslin coined the term “The Theatre of the Absurd” in his 1960 book of the same name. He defined it as such, because all of the plays emphasized the absurdity of the human condition. Whereas we tend to use the word “absurd” synonymously with “ridiculous,” Esslin was referring to the original meaning of the word – ‘out of harmony with reason or propriety; illogical’ (Esslin 23). Essentially, each play renders man’s existence as illogical, and moreover, meaningless. This idea was a reaction to the “collapse of moral, religious, political, and social structures” following the two World Wars of the 20th century (Abbottson 1). (University of Delaware).

SYNOPSIS OF *THE MAIDS*

WARNING! SPOILERS! DO NOT READ IF YOU WANT TO BE SURPRISED!

Absurdism can be difficult to access if you prefer following a plot. One of the functions of absurdist writing is to have a dizzying effect, allowing the spectators to feel the emotions of their existential confrontations rather than simply describing them. If you’d like to know the “story” of *The Maids*, read below. However, do note that this does contain spoilers for the show! We recommend watching the show and reading this after, but you can choose your own adventure!

“Jean Genet’s *The Maids* was inspired by a real-life case of the infamous sisters, Christine and Léa Papin, who murdered their employer and her daughter in 1933. In Genet’s reimagining of the case, sisters Solange and Claire play out the same role play every evening while their wealthy mistress is out of the house. In a subversive and sexually charged scenario, the sisters fantasize about murdering Madame. Claire, the youngest and frailest of the two, becomes Madame, while Solange, the eldest and most resentful, plays Claire. However, as they get carried away, their emotions intensify and the line between fantasy and reality becomes blurred. It emerges that Solange has tried to kill Madame before but failed, and so the sisters resolve to try again. When Madame returns home one day, Claire laces her tea with poison and the women await her fate. However, in a twist of timing, Madame receives the news that her lover has been let out of jail on bail and she rushes to him, leaving the tea untouched. Trapped as prisoners in their own game, Claire resumes the role of the mistress and ...”

You’ll have to watch and see what happens!



*The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (part of the Rubenstein Arts Access Program) is generously funded by **David M. Rubenstein**.*

Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.

Additional support is provided by The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; and the Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation.

Kennedy Center education and related artistic programming is made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

“...thanks, And thanks and ever thanks...”

-Twelfth Night, Act III,
by William Shakespeare

Dear Patrons,

Thank you for attending tonight's show, and I hope you enjoy!

We are proud to offer you this performance as our gift to you in gratitude for your patronage and support.

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- **SU Dance Company**

Our theatre and dance seasons will continue to grow and prosper because of your loyalty and commitment to the performing arts in our community. I thank you on behalf of our students, our faculty, the Bobbi Biron Theatre and the SU Dance Company.

Sincerely,

John L. Raley

Co-Chair, Department of Music, Theatre & Dance
Associate Professor of Theatre

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in making theatre and dance in our Lower Shore community possible

(Based on most recent information available)

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University & Salisbury Chorales

Saturday, May 6 • 7:30 p.m.
Holloway Hall Auditorium

Salisbury Pops

Tuesday, May 9 • 7:30 p.m.
Holloway Hall Auditorium

Dalton Bosserman Recital

Friday, May 12 • 7:30 p.m.
Holloway Hall, Great Hall

Salisbury Symphony Orchestra

Summer Passport Featuring

John Kurokawa

Saturday, May 13 • 7:30 p.m.
Holloway Hall Auditorium

PRESTO

Tuesday, May 16 • 5 p.m. & 7 p.m.
Holloway Hall, Great Hall

Salisbury Youth Orchestra

Thursday, May 18 • 7:30 p.m.
Holloway Hall Auditorium

For tickets, visit: www.salisbury.edu/performingarts

For more information, email: fultonboxoffice@salisbury.edu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dr. Carolyn Ringer Lepre, *President, Salisbury University*

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Dr. Maarten Pereboom, *Dean, Fulton School of Liberal Arts*

Colleen Clark, *Co-Chair, Department of Music, Theatre and Dance*

John Raley, *Co-Chair, Department of Music, Theatre and Dance*

Brooke Church, *Department of Music, Theatre and Dance*

Shawn Stone, *Department of Music, Theatre and Dance*

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of the Late Charles R. & Martha N. Fulton.*